

Interests and Dependencies: The Pacific After Cook

by

Dr. Craig Severance*

Assistant Professor, Anthropology

University of Hawaii at Hilo

When Cook entered the Pacific, he entered into transactions or exchanges which established "interest" relationships between himself and individual political figures in what were generally, at the time, autonomous Pacific cultures. These exchanges included material items and genetic and other kinds of information, and they led not only to wider knowledge of the Pacific by the metropolitan powers but to a wider knowledge of outsiders and of each other by the islanders themselves. Yet it seems to have been a lack of knowledge of each other's real and potential power that led to the final misunderstanding at Kealakekua.

My paper concerns not Cook, but the complexity of the contemporary political economy of the Pacific and what appears to me to be a lack of knowledge and understanding of the relative amount of real and potential power held on the one hand by emerging island political groupings and on the other by the metropolitan powers with Pacific interests. The paper is thus a call for a rethinking of the relationships of metropolitan and Pacific cultures and the ways in which changing "interests" and "dependencies" may influence a Pacific future.

In the last two decades moves of political independence in the context of economic dependence have been made. The next two decades will see shifting interests and dependencies. It is obvious that Pacific

*© copyright, 1978

Islanders themselves will take a much more outspoken and active role in planning programs of local and national social and economic development while seeking an elusive "Pacific Way." It is probable that Pacific Islanders may also adopt third world political symbols and make increasing efforts to actually or symbolically avoid the dependencies of perceived neocolonialism.

The worldwide regularities that followed the economic expansion of industrial Europe (Bodley, 1975) and its derivative nation states (Anzus and Japan) as well as the peculiarities of the penetration of private and public interests into the Pacific need no enumeration here.

Spoehr's (1966) call for studies of the Pacific as a whole or region continues to have relevance. If we as observers are to offer any understanding of future directions in the region, we must develop analytical approaches that facilitate an understanding of continuing metropolitan interests, of developing local and regional interests and of the networks and acts of decision by which complementary and conflicting interests are articulated.

The social sciences, and in particular my own discipline, anthropology, have just begun the task of trying to understand the integration and interdependence of all the seemingly autonomous cultural systems that have occurred since Cook. Worldwide systems of communication and trade are only part of this integration for it includes quite varied "interest" and "dependency" relationships.

The island Pacific may be considered both as a region and as an interest area. I choose the term "interest area" to emphasize continuing metropolitan interests, interests of the islanders in the metropolises, and a growing recognition of "common interests" between island

and cultural groups. I believe that we need more adequate analytical models of interest relationships and power relationships before we can hope to truly understand how dependency and interdependency affect the contemporary Pacific scene. Competing theories or approaches to economic and social development exist and many of the basic terms and concepts (including those in this paper) remain poorly defined and difficult to operationalize. Though caution is advised, we should not let caution prevent us from making a few preliminary definitional attempts, even if they cannot be easily empirically grounded.

"Interests" develop from contacts and interchange of information about the potential use of resources controlled by the respective parties to the interest relationship. Parties to interest relationships may be individuals, cultural and social groups, territories, regional organizations or nation states.

From exchange theory we note that the simplest or basic interest relationships are two party relationships. Exchanges between the parties forge a linkage or network of potentially continuing interchange, and such networks may serve as mechanisms of distribution not only of resources and information but of power. The "interests" of each party may be latent or manifest. The particular interests of a single party may complement and/or contradict each other, as may the particular interests of any two or three parties.

Interests may also vary from time to time and situation to situation in the relative importance of political, economic, strategic and even nationally or culturally symbolic identity needs. "Interest" relationships are by their very nature relationships of power in which one party to the relationship has come to consider the other as being

within its domain of influence, yet power relationships are reciprocal and never completely one-sided. The dependent or subordinate party always has partial control over some physical, social and/or symbolic resources which are of interest to the dominant party. For our purpose, power in social relations may be defined after Adams (1970) as the relative amount of tactical control that one party holds over the environment of another party. It may also be conceived of as the level of potential cost that party A may choose to induce for party B given B's dependence on A for resources. It is important to make a distinction between direct power which comes from having direct control over resources (land, labor, technology) and derived power which comes from an ability to gain tactical access to power sources at higher levels of articulation in the system. The term level of articulation is chosen to emphasize the increased number of units that can affect power transfers within a complex network of interdependency ties.

Ties that transfer power may be sources of integration as well as conflict for the parties in the network. Social anthropology has tended to emphasize the functionally integrative nature of such exchanges. Yet cultural evolutionary approaches have begun to emphasize the potential for competition and conflict over power sources. As different levels of articulation are considered the networks become rapidly more complex and the relative amounts of power and interest of the different parties are much more difficult to observe and measure.

Logically, two or more subordinate power units may find themselves within the power domain of a single supraordinate unit and rather than pooling their direct power may compete for derived power from the supraordinate. Subordinate units may also pool both direct and derived power

in order to increase the flow of derived power to themselves as a new intermediate unit. By pooling direct power, intermediate units may buffer the effects of supraordinate power centers and may also be able to manipulate subordinate units by permitting downward derived power flows.

Subordinate units may also attempt to enter into new exchanges with other power centers in order to derive new power buffers or to raise themselves to a higher position or an intermediate level of articulation. This may give the units more power over subordinate constituents. Yet, since intermediate power units are subordinate themselves, they may generally only do this successfully when the action does not manifestly conflict with the interests of the dominant power upon which they are dependent. And it may be a simple matter, of course, for a supraordinate unit to alternate its release of power to subordinates in order to keep them in competition and thus in balance.

Current actors within the contemporary Pacific political scene, if we use this kind of modeling, may be understood as brokers who attempt to gather more power from both supraordinate and subordinate power units in order to control and influence, if not expand their own domains. Studies of brokerage may improve our understanding of the management of conflict and cooperation at intermediate levels of articulation yet we need to develop models which can assess the relative amounts of power at upper and lower levels.

We need to recognize that both conflict and cooperation characterize interdependency and that observers must specify their nature in each series of transactions rather than assuming that interests of dominant parties are either uniform or must necessarily conflict with those of

subordinates. Certainly, France's interests are not uniform for her different Pacific territories nor do they parallel the interests of other dominant power units in the Pacific, such as New Zealand or the United States.

In observing power and interest relationships we must also examine in detail the varying linkages between the parties and the nature and "interests" of the power units themselves. It is only by a most careful analysis of the network of connections and the relative amounts of real power controlled by parties to interest relationships in the Pacific that we will be able to gain real understanding of the possibilities for economic and social development.

Brookfield (1975) has suggested that we may be entering a conceptual revolution, or if you will, a paradigm shift or rethinking of how development and underdevelopment come about. Let us hope so, because our present ideas about development seem underdeveloped, if not simply ideological. A simplistic contrast may be made between the orthodox approaches to modernization which assume that the export of aid (capital, technology and managerial expertise) will allow the lesser developed units (which are generally subordinates in interest relationships) to catch up to the developed ones. The alternative and less orthodox approach assumes automatically that it is the dependency of the subordinate units in an interest relationship that keeps them underdeveloped. It does appear that after two decades of development under United Nations auspices the smaller, less developed, island territories seem even farther behind.

Is there then a linkage between development in the metropolitan industrial power units and dependency and underdevelopment in the subordinate units? If so, we have yet to completely understand its nature.

Dependency models or approaches imply such a direct linkage so that development in metropolises (the dominant parties in interest and power relationships) generates underdevelopment in satellites. This view is commonly associated with native Latin American scholars looking northward (Furtado, Frank) though a logically similar view was originally expressed by Gunnar Myrdal in the 1950's. Such a view could be readily adopted by many Pacific Islanders today. It is a view with ideological and political significance yet it may be no less objective in a scientific sense than the more orthodox view.

Metropole-satellite models are often applied to dependency relationships and they are as logically simple as the model of power and interest relations stated above. Following such a model, it was only after the downward flow of derived power and a decline in the manifested "interests" of the Spanish, German and English metropolises that their former satellites (the Anzus nations) could become new metropolises with their own satellites. Fiji and Papua New Guinea may well, through secondary development (Adams, 1967), soon emerge as important intermediate metropolises for the region.

Yet it may simply be too simplistic to characterize the ties between metropolitan interests and Pacific cultures as ones of simple dependency and continuing underdevelopment. It might indeed be argued that since Cook, the world has in an evolutionary sense reached a new level of integration, complexity and interdependence which we have yet to understand completely.

Cardoso (Kahl, 1976) has recently criticized the use of metropole satellite models by referring to "crude dependency theory." He argues that simplistic use of dependency models implies that real power and decision-making are concentrated in the dominant metropolises. If particular

cases are examined in detail, individual political figures of particular dependent areas appear to exhibit a range of optionality and independent choice in their decision-making. The range of such choices may be narrow or broad depending on the particulars of the situation and the manifested power of the dominant unit.

Political spokesmen in the emerging island states find themselves able to utilize varying mixtures of direct and derived power in confrontations with the supraordinate units. As Adam has noted "strength without purpose invites low level political maneuvering." It is not only variety but inconsistency in the manifested interest of the dominant metropolitan powers which allows such flexibility.

Perhaps we can better understand such recent political events as Somare's visit to China, Nakayama's visit to Japan, and Tongan negotiations with the Soviets as being the results of attempts to gain new sources of derived power.

These individuals are power brokers who are articulate, politically effective spokesmen for the constituent interest units within their own power domains. The flow of power to them will allow them to control more effectively (or at least appease) lesser power units beneath them.

The emerging regional centers, while politically independent, remain economically and militarily dependent on supraordinate power centers. We must therefore ask to what degree choices may be made that come into manifest conflict with the latent "interests" of the more powerful metropolises. Such choices or decisions imply a rationally conscious assessment of the power units. This will require developing models that can include, therefore, each actor's definition of the situation -- which implies a rational recognition of his relative power.

Power relationships in the Pacific can no longer be simply conceived as two-way exchanges between satellites and metropolises. Regional power units are emerging to buffer metropolitan "interests" and to coordinate and unify domains by extending derived power to satellite units. Regional organizations such as S.P.E.C. and the University of the South Pacific may well lead to more economic cooperation and less competition, yet even these organizations depend to a degree on derived power from interested metropolitan parties.

Recent moves by the Soviets and Chinese within a worldwide context of détente may substantially modify the post World War II "structuring" of power relationships in the Pacific. They have the potential of becoming new sources of derived power for the emerging Pacific states. The size and resources of Pacific island groupings remain small in comparison to the developed metropolitan power centers with continuing "interests" in the region. Even though new resources presently in the control of Pacific groups may become important in the future, they will generally require technology and capital from the metropolises for their exploitation. Perhaps it is in recognition of continuing economic dependency that there has been so much recent political emphasis on social development and "The Pacific Way."

While "crude dependency theory" may become ideologically attractive, it seems inadequate as a tool for understanding. Only by a refined development of models and analytical understanding of the real limits and real options of power brokers at different levels of articulation can we hope for real understanding (rather than misunderstanding) in the Pacific in the third century after Cook.

References

Adam, Thomas R.

1967 Western Interests in the Pacific Realm. New York, Random House.

Adams, Richard N.

1967 The Second Sowing. San Francisco, Chandler.

1970 Crucifixion by Power. Austin, University of Texas Press.

1974 "Harnessing Technological Development" in Poggie, J.J. and Lynch, R.N. eds. Rethinking Modernization, Westport, Greenwood Press.

1977 "Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis" in Fogelson, R.D. and Adams, R.N. eds. The Anthropology of Power, New York, Academic Press.

Bodley, J.

1975 Victims of Progress. Menlo Park, Cummings.

Brookfield, Harold

1975 Interdependent Development. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press.

Frank, Andrew Gunder

1969 Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. New York, Monthly Review Press.

Furtado, Celso

1964 Development and Underdevelopment. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Gordon, B. and Rothwell, K., eds.

1975 The New Political Economy of the Pacific. Cambridge, Ballinger Publication Company.

Grogan, Noel

1976 "Dependency and Nondevelopment in Micronesia" in King, F.P., ed. Oceania and Beyond, Essays on the Pacific Since 1945, Westport, Greenwood Press.

Kahl, Joseph A.

1976 Modernization, Exploitation and Dependency in Latin America, New York, Transaction Books.

Maingot, Anthony P.

"National Responses to External Dependency: The Caribbean as an "Interest Area." Paper presented at conference: Contemporary Trends and Issues in Caribbean International Affairs. Trinidad, May 1977.

Myrdal, Gunnar

1957 Rich Lands and Poor, The Road to World Prosperity. New York, Harper.

Spoehr, Alexander

1966 "The Part and the Whole: Reflections on the Study of a Region" American Anthropologist 68 (3): 629-640.

Tupouniua, Sione, Ron Crocombe and Claire Slatter

1975 The Pacific Way. Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association.

Valentine, C.A.

1970 "Social Status, Political Power and Native Responses to European Influences in Oceania" in Harding, T.G. and Wallace, B.J., eds. Cultures of the Pacific. New York, Free Press.